DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 579 IR 022 183

AUTHOR	McClelland, Robert J.
TITLE	Developing an Organisational E-Learning Strategy.
PUB DATE	2002-10-00
NOTE	7p.; In: E-Learn 2002 World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, & Higher Education. Proceedings (7th, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, October 15-19, 2002); see IR 022 093.
AVAILABLE FROM	Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), P.O. Box 3728, Norfolk, VA 23514. Tel: 757-623-7588; e-mail: info@aace.org; Web site: http://www.aace.org/DL/.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	*Computer Assisted Instruction; Computer Mediated Communication; *Distance Education; Educational Development; Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Instructional Design; *Instructional Development; Learning Strategies; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Liverpool John Moores University (England)

ABSTRACT

Liverpool John Moores University (JMU) is one of the largest universities in the United Kingdom. It is a multi-faculty institution with in excess of 20,000 students. Its first learning strategy, in 1995, sought to identify and make explicit the University's commitment to learning development and to integrate this in the context of other University policies and strategies. The underpinning principles of the strategy were derived from the University's mission statement, with detailed targets for implementation, responsibilities for action and costings. In the years 1995-1999, institutional and local structures and processes were developed to support implementation, with a particular strength at the local level being the introduction of Learning and Teaching Coordinators (LTCs) in each of the University's Schools. This case study examines institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy and decision-making which impacts on the promotion of information and communications technology for learning in Liverpool JMU. (Author/AEF)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C.H. Marks

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Developing an Organisational E-Learning Strategy

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

INTRODUCTION

During the past five years Blackboard and WebCT have become the world's leading learning platform vendors, having achieved spectacular market penetration in a small number of countries. Learning platforms offer enhanced student access to learning materials, straightforward integration of digital content and a range of student interaction and tracking services. Different systems have different emphases, but common features include content authoring tools, calendars, syllabi, discussion boards and assessment mechanisms.

ED 479 579

Liverpool John Moores University (JMU) is one of the largest universities in the UK. It is a multi-faculty institution with in excess of 20,000 students. Its first learning strategy, in 1995, sought to identify and make explicit the University's commitment to learning development and to integrate this in the context of other University policies and strategies. The underpinning principles of the strategy were derived from the University's mission statement, with detailed targets for implementation, responsibilities for action and costings. In the years 1995 - 1999 institutional and local structures and processes were developed to support implementation, with a particular strength at the local level being the introduction of Learning and Teaching Coordinators (LTC's) in each of the University's Schools.

CONCISE CASE STUDY

The purpose of the case study is to examine institutional Learning and Teaching Strategy and decision-making which impacts on the promotion of ICT for learning, in Liverpool JMU These particular processes have been monitored by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Annual reviews of the JMU learning strategy, since 1995, demonstrated that significant progress was made across a number of fronts. It was observed that a number of real improvements in the learner support infrastructure were made, with substantial investment in development of the University network giving better access to ICT, induction in the use of ICT and in extending opening hours of JMU's three Learning Resource Centres. Increased emphasis was placed on front-loading support for students in the early stages of programmes, with a range of local subject-specific pilots focusing on the development of tutorial modules.

As a result of these initiatives there was evidence of increased use of ICT by both staff and students, particularly in the use of email for communication and there occurred a range of developments across the University in the area of web-based learning.

In 1999 a range of LTA themes, for the following three years, was developed. JMU took, as a primary focus, the need to provide a straightforward and limited set of initiatives that were meaningful to all groups of staff concerned with supporting learning within JMU and their franchised programmes. Five themes for Learning, Teaching and Assessment for the academic years 1999/2002 were developed. The five themes were positioned in two functional categories: three **Learning Themes** that encompassed various fundamental aspects of LTA; and two **Enabling Themes** that underpinned the Learning Themes, infusing and supporting them in a way thought to be fundamental to the success of the whole enterprise. For each of the

IR022183

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

five themes there was a deliberately planned short period at the outset for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of developments, in order to maximise the effectiveness of the new initiatives. Similarly as each new theme was undertaken, a robust processes for monitoring and evaluation was incorporated.

The five themes were:

- Effective and Efficient Assessment
- Curricular Enhancement for Employability
- Enhanced Learner Support
- Promotion of ICT for Learning
- Staff Development for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The rationale of the fourth **enabling** theme, Promotion of ICT for Learning, was concerned with exploiting new learning technologies in relevant and appropriate ways in order to enhance learning, teaching and assessment. The theme recognised that the shift towards greater use of ICT in student learning brings with it a requirement for staff to have the requisite skills and understanding in order to exploit the huge potential of ICT in interactive learning. As part of this theme there was a particular focus on:

- Staff development;
- Opportunities for ICT supported Learning
- Learner Support Infrastructure

The stated goals of the theme were:

1. To identify and adopt good skills and practices for ICT-supported learning;

2. To incorporate interactive ICT usage in the learning process throughout JMU;

3. To identify the resource implications of promoting ICT-enhanced learning

A Learning Development Team was created at JMU to focus on the operationalisation of the LTA strategy. This core permanent team is small but LTA Theme Coordinators and part-time secondments for specific projects supplement it. There are five LTA Themes and each of these has a Coordinator working for 50% of their time on activities relating to the implementation of the LTA strategy. The Theme Coordinators function within the Learning Development Team but spend much of their time working across the University. They report their activities to a Learning Innovation Committee.

As mentioned previously there had occurred a range of developments across the University in the area of web-based learning. These began in 1997 with the introduction of a staff/student resource, a university supported Document Management System to support academic staff in placing materials on its campus wide information system (cwis). This web-based system supported small pockets of Learning and Teaching activity. In 1998 a number of staff, from several Schools within JMU, designed and developed complementary templates to serve the needs of students for modules of different programmes. The two separate web-based support

mechanisms operated in parallel within JMU. In one case, Liverpool Business School academic designed templates formed the basis of the principal module web support provision for students. The latter initiative supported the stated goals of the fourth stated LTA theme for JMU and many research studies were undertaken concerning student perceptions and the impacts of the web-sites on learning and teaching development.

In 2001 a Web-Supported Learning Working Group was established at JMU to identify, evaluate and approve systems that support on-line learning. The group consisted of academics from a range of faculties, educational researchers, web-site developers, Learning and Information managers, Computer and Information Managers, Learning Development Team managers and it was chaired by the university's Director of Academic Innovation. As a consequence the group evaluated commercial Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). Such as Blackboard and WebCT with some being tested by a number of different Schools and Service Teams. Other platforms were also investigated. The 'approved' system, Blackboard, was identified on the basis of comments and experiences from representatives of all stakeholders.

Scenario planning was undertaken, determining the functionality required to provide the ideal platform for JMU, including a JMU portal. Criteria included: capacity for all academic staff to have their own online space; training for academic staff; student allocation of modules and modular catalogue details; common service for on and off campus students; processes for faculty to manage and develop learning materials; and seamless integration with existing (and those in development) information technology systems.

The beginning of the 2001/2002 Academic Year saw the arrival of the **Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment** at JMU, replacing the JMU supported Document Management System as a web based system to support learning and teaching. The introduction of this VLE also provided a viable replacement for the academic designed templates. As well as allowing access to course materials via the web, Blackboard also offers a number of communications tools, including Announcements and the Virtual Classroom, all of which can be used to enhance the learning experience.

The Web-Supported Learning Working Group has now evolved into a Web-supported Learning Panel with representation from across the university, the panel is tasked with addressing issues concerned with Web-supported Learning; strategy, evaluation and projects. It is now the case that previous research and current research studies concerning student perceptions and the impacts of the web-sites on learning and teaching development will be focused on establishing 'best practice' in the internal use of VLE's.

In an effort to further enhance and develop initiatives for the five themes for Learning, Teaching and Assessment during the 2001/2 academic year over thirty-six awards were given out by the Learning Development Team to celebrate excellent practice in learning, teaching and assessment.

Awards were made using £63,000 of the HEFCE learning and teaching strategy money to make these awards in four categories. They involved staff from every School/Faculty and from Learning and Information Services and included teaching and learning, technical, administrative support staff and postgraduate students. Many of the awards were team awards. The aim of the awards was to raise the profile of teaching and learning at JMU and to recognise and reward effective practice."

The four award categories were: Curriculum Innovation: to recognise innovative curriculum development work that has already been undertaken Curriculum Development: to support new curriculum development work Teaching-related Research: to support staff researching their own learning, teaching and assessment practice Teaching Fellowship: to recognise individual excellence in teaching.

Many of the awards in Curriculum Innovation and Teaching-related Research support the Promotion of ICT for Learning theme and one of the three Teaching Fellowships is specifically focused on gauging and disseminating 'best practice' in the use of Blackboard.

Only one learning platform is now supported centrally at JMU. Academic staffs in Faculties are free to use other platforms but must fund and support them themselves. Whilst JMU has selected a single centrally supported learning platform, the University recognises that this is a rapidly evolving market and will regularly review its approach, and has put in place strategies to facilitate platform portability.

SOME RESEARCH FINDINGS CONCERNING BLACKBOARD USE

A series of surveys were undertaken on students using web templates for modules designed by academics in the academic year 2000/2001. The cohorts studied were both undergraduates and postgraduates. The surveys explored student attitudes and perceptions to the web-sites as well as providing insights into learning strategies adopted. Knowledge of student Learning Styles was incorporated into all assessments made. Results from these surveys have been reported (McClelland 2001a & 2001b). Follow up surveys of undergraduate and postgraduate students on modules using Blackboard (where the previous supports were web templates designed by academics) has also been undertaken (McClelland 2002 unpublished). .

A series of studies concerned with the sum-total of technology-based supports currently offered to students in JMU has been undertaken, representing a UK university that has a technological infrastructure (McClelland, 2001c). The research that supports this publication examines student perceptions of administrative support systems offered through a campus wide information system and range of supporting web-sites hosted at JMU. The research gives a systemic perspective and refers to Blackboard (now JMU's chosen format for web-site presentation to students).

In order to obtain vital feedback on the new Blackboard system, two JMU surveys were implemented in December 2001 to obtain user feedback of the system - one survey for staff, the second for students (Bird and Connor, 2002 unpublished).

A summary of the findings for the above surveys can be found in Table 1

It can be seen from conclusions in Table 1 that there is overwhelming support for E-Learning in Higher Education being an evolutionary change rather than revolutionary. Internal research (from JMU) indicates and supports incremental changes and this is mirrored by experiences in a comparable University to JMU, Edith Cowan University, Australia (The Observatory on borderless Higher Education, 2002).

Research Findings	Conclusions
Academic designed web-site supports enable flexibility for both students and tutors, avoiding restrictions such as time, place and accessibility of knowledge supports. Students at lower levels of a programme use sites more frequently. (McCldland, 2001a & 2001b).	Restrictions such as time, place and accessibility of knowledge supports support a continuous change model. Usage patterns indicate increasing usage of web-sites for less experienced learners.
Introduction of a commercial VLE, Blackboard, shows no major differences in student perceptions of quality, content, administration and learning experience than those experiences of academic designed web-sites. No differences in mean importance of all Blackboard site supports were observed when factored by the variable Student Learning Styles. Previous research on none Blackboard web-sites (McClelland, 2001b) had found one variance from this with External Links (exploring the web).	The no differences observation infers continuous change from a simple to a more complex form. The Learning Styles observation infers that Blackboard does not discriminate preferred learning styles of students and supports. This is a step improvement from observations on web-sites designed by academics. This can be viewed as continuous change.
At JMU the principles of clarity; attention; integrity and strategic use of informal information have been used in it's strategic transformational change processes due to a combination of consistent information flows; a series of targeted internal studies; a focus of all communications supporting organisational objectives and through the transparency of the transformation process, and wide involvement of staff, strategic use has been made of informal information. (McClelland, 2000 & 2001c)	Action and communication are developmental rather than major changes. The communication within JMU is to effect change and influence action in the direction of JMU's overall interest.
Almost 1000 students responded to a survey of Blackboard use (n = 900). 50% stated that all or most of their module leaders employed use of Blackboard. 71% indicated that they would like it used for more of their modules. There is evidence that Blackboard has a role to play in widening participation. Majority of staff and students view Blackboard as having great potential in enhancing and supporting learning but acknowledge that it needs to be exploited much more (Bird & Connor, 2002)	Uptake is gradual in the transition from JMU supported and academic designed web-provision, but greater than that previously experienced. There is a wider acceptance and greater perceived benefits. Awareness is widened and initiatives are developing. The changes are developmental and not fundamental complete changes.
In a case study on Edith Cowan University's introduction of Blackboard (Australia) the lessons that were taken on board were 'establishing a clear relationship between institutional strategy for online learning and the platform selection process; mapping the necessary links between the platform and existing in-house information technology and the value of active engagement and support for one learning platform, whilst other systems were allowed where local markets dictated.' The Observatory On borderless Higher Education, 2002).	Supports JMU experience of internal monitoring, evaluation and consultation processes, but focusing and supporting one platform whilst allowing flexibility. Supports incremental changes.

Table 1 Research Findings and Conclusions Concerning Blackboard Use to Date.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH BLACKBOARD

Liverpool JMU is currently developing a generic intellectual property policy for teaching and learning resources, including online materials available through the Blackboard sites, on-line articles and e-Book arrangements with publishers such as McGraw-Hill.

As a result of the experience gained through developments of web-sites and online delivery, JMU is part of a consortium producing and facilitating a Masters in Enterprise (M.Ent.) degree for Small to Medium size Enterprises in the UK. This is a distance programme utilising a Blackboard platform.

Liverpool Business School, in the JMU Faculty of Business and Law has developed a suite of Masters level modules on Blackboard which can constitute tailored Masters Programmès such as Masters in Business Studies (MBS), Masters in Business

Administration (MBA). These will allow more flexibility in differing delivery modes and a commercial product for international educational markets.

CONCLUSION

Research at JMU has demonstrated that web-sites enable a more consistent corporate image on-line, allow support services to focus and raises faculty and student skill levels and reduce confusion between the functionality of different systems. Use of the commercial VLE, Blackboard, offers to facilitate integration with in-house systems, such as Oracle.

The JMU experience holds a number of lessons, including establishing a clear relationship between institutional strategy for online learning and the learning platform selection process; mapping the necessary links between the platform and existing in-house information technology and the value of active engagement; support from senior managers; celebrate excellent practice in learning, teaching and assessment by motivating staff to develop sites by providing suitable reward structures; channelling best practice and supporting staff development in producing appropriate resources.

Although it may be too early to comment on to what extent, and in what ways, VLE's will have a long-term effect on teaching and learning a noteworthy development are the immediate commercial possibilities and educational markets for Programmes endorsed by universities and mediated through commercial VLE's.

REFERENCES

Bird, A., Connor, C. (2002) Blackboard User Evaluation Report, JMU

McClelland, R.J. (2000) Campus Wide Information Systems: An Integration Development for H.E. United Kingdom Academy of Information Systems UKAIS 2000 Conference, University of Wales Cardiff, 26 - 28 April 2000, McGraw-Hill, ISBN 0 07 709755 6

McClelland, R.J. (2001a), Digital Learning and Teaching: evaluation of developments for students in Higher Education, *European Journal Engineering Education* 26 No. 2 pp 107 - 115 ISSN 0304-3797 (print), ISSN 1469-5898 (on-line)

McClelland, R.J. (2001b) Web-based Delivery of a Generic Research Methods Module (for Social Sciences): The Graduate and Post-Graduate Experience. *Conference: Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education*, Orlando, USA 5 - 10 March 2001, Association for the Advancement of Computing Education (AACE) pp 2595 - 2600 ISBN 1-880094-41-X

McClelland, R.J. (2001c), Web-based administrative supports for university students, *International Journal Educational Management*, Vol.15 No.6 pp 292 – 302 ISSN 0951-354X

The Observatory On borderless Higher Education, Leading Learning Platforms: International Market presence **2** March 2002

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[X] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[ ] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").